

bump on the way to Stockbridge, Williamstown and the glories of Tanglewood and Jacob's Pillow.

But the city is betting that, with the help of a long-neglected jewel of a theater, it too can make a place for itself on the region's arts map. After a two-year, \$22 million restoration, the century-old Colonial Theater will reopen tonight for a year-round season that kicks off with a week's visit by a touring company of "Rent." After that, there are more than 40 other events scheduled for the rest of the year.

For years, few outsiders were aware of what lay behind the neo-Classical yellow-brick facade on the Route 7 commercial strip. But inside was a grand Broadway-style theater, a Gilded Age monument designed by J.B. McElfatrick, who designed dozens of New York theaters, including the Theater Republic (now the New Victory) on 42nd Street.

From its opening in 1903 to the early 30s, the house, which seated about 1,400, was a regular stop for the likes of Sarah Bernhardt, the Barrymores, Rachmaninoff, Will Rogers and John Philip Sousa. Anna Pavlova danced by, as did the Ziegfeld Follies (100 strong).

In 1937, the Colonial was converted into a movie palace, but by 1952 it had gone dark. It was saved from demolition only because a local businessman, George Miller, bought it and housed his paint business inside.

The idea of transforming the city into a cultural center received a boost in 1998, when Hillary Rodham Clinton, then the first lady, visited the Colonial as part of a "Save America's Treasures" tour.

"Her visit said, 'You have a national treasure—it's worth fighting for,'" said John Bissell, a senior vice president at the Greylock Federal Credit Union and a prominent figure in the move to revitalize Pittsfield.

In 2002, the city commissioned a study on the potential economic benefits of restoring the theater. The study, led by Stephen Sheppard, an economics professor at Williams College, forecast \$2 million a year in direct economic benefits to Pittsfield and an increase in local property values of at least \$23 million.

That study "quantified what we felt instinctively, that the theater would indeed make economic sense," said James M. Ruberto, Pittsfield's mayor and a major force behind the renovation.

After Mrs. Clinton's visit and the study, of course, came the fund-raising. Ultimately, some \$7 million came from donations, the rest from city, state and federal grants and tax credits.

"I have been amazed at the amount of money given to the Colonial," said Gary Scarafoni, a retired banker who is now the theater's president.

The theater itself was a shambles, said Tom Johnson of Martinez & Johnson, the Washington architects responsible for the restoration. In the half-darkness of the balcony, "you could see the plaster detailing," big pieces of which were starting to fall.

Now, the curves and curlicues of the interior ornamentation—which Mr. Johnson describes as eclectic neo-Classical—have been restored to their original glory.

But the renovation remains a gamble. David W. Fleming, recently hired as the theater's executive director, said that the Colonial would have an annual overhead of at least \$750,000 and expected artists' fees, marketing and stagehand costs collectively to fall in the same range.

That means, said Mr. Fleming, who previously ran the Grand Opera House in Wilmington, Del., and the New Brunswick Cultural Center in New Jersey, that the theater will need to fill about 60 percent of its seats

if it is to pay half its annual expenses from ticket sales.

"Ideally," he said, "I'd like to see us cover more like 65 percent"—with the rest coming from annual donations.

He said he hoped that within a few years, the theater, now reconfigured to seat 810, would be active 200 nights a year, with events that appeal to all tastes and budgets. This season's offerings include low-priced fare like Cirkus Inferno and the Inflatable Theater Company.

The theater will have to rely in part on out-of-town audiences. The city's population, roughly 57,000 in 1960, fell steadily after General Electric, which once employed more than 10,000 workers here, gradually shut down most of its operations, paring the workforce to less than 1,000. The population is now 43,000 and is projected to fall considerably further in the next two decades.

The city is betting that, if it can transform itself into an arts center, it can reverse that slide. It took a first step in that direction when the highly regarded Barrington Stage Company moved into a renovated 1912 music hall in downtown Pittsfield this month after working for years out of a high school auditorium in Sheffield, in the southwest corner of the state. The company plans spring, summer and fall productions.

Mr. Bissell of the credit union argues that people will come, not only to visit but also to live. He cites the rise of the local real estate market since the Colonial restoration project was announced.

"When new businesses come to town," he added, "every single one cites the rebirth of the Colonial as a primary reason why they chose this location."

Such optimism is not universal. Jonathan Levine, publisher of The Pittsfield Gazette, said that while he was "thrilled to have a renovated theater," he questioned the business projections behind it.

"They've made all these economic development promises," Mr. Levine said, "and there is no way, with their current programming, they can achieve those goals."

But the Colonial can boast of something that half of every Broadway audience can only dream about. The theater bought an abutting property that will house, in addition to the main entrance, a gigantic ladies' room.●

#### IN MEMORY OF MATTHEW S. COSTA

● Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I rise today in memory of Matthew S. Costa, an outstanding young man from Cheshire, CT who died tragically on September 3. I am very saddened to hear of Matthew's death and will be keeping his friends and family in my thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.

At the time of his death Matthew was serving in Mali as a volunteer for the U.S. Peace Corps. Matthew enrolled in the Peace Corps in 2003 and had been serving in the Malian village of Kati since November 2005, after teaching English in Chad for 2 years.

While in Kati, Matthew helped foster one of the Peace Corps core missions, fostering cultural exchange, by fully immersing himself in the local community. He taught English to local high school students and organized training for other teachers in the community. He was also widely known in the community as the host of a popular radio

program that played popular American music and then worked with the radio station to improve its marketing strategy. Matthew also sought to involve himself with the village community by playing in a local soccer league and helping to distribute donations of sports equipment.

What I think was truly remarkable about Matthew is that after graduating from Tulane University in 2003, a time in which there must have been unlimited opportunities open for Matthew to pursue, he chose to delay any future career plans to help others and broaden his cultural understanding. Matthew volunteered to travel many miles from home and, if necessary, to give up many of the modern conveniences we often take for granted. Matthew liked it so much, that in 2005 he extended his service. Matthew's sacrifice and dedication is truly inspiring.

The passing of Matthew Costa is truly a loss for the Peace Corps, for the people of Mali, and for Connecticut. May his selfless devotion to helping others live on in the hearts and minds of those who knew him best and were served by his good works.●

#### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message from the President of the United States was communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.

#### EXECUTIVE MESSAGE REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate a message from the President of the United States submitting a nomination which was referred to the Committee on Finance.

(The nomination received today is printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

#### DRAFT OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION ENTITLED "MILITARY COMMISSIONS ACT OF 2006"—PM 55

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services:

*To the Congress of the United States:*

I transmit for the consideration of the Congress draft legislation entitled the "Military Commissions Act of 2006." This draft legislation responds to the Supreme Court of the United States decision in *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*, 126 S. Ct. 2749 (2006), by establishing for the first time in our Nation's history a comprehensive statutory structure for military commissions that would allow for the fair and effective prosecution of captured members of al Qaeda and other unlawful enemy combatants. The Act also addresses the Supreme Court's holding that Common Article 3 of the Geneva